

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4060

To establish the Commission on the Future for America's Veterans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 11, 1996

Mr. SOLOMON (for himself, Mr. STUMP, Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma, and Mr. LONGLEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committees on Rules, and National Security, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish the Commission on the Future for America's
Veterans.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Commission on the
5 Future for America's Veterans Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established a commission
8 to be known as the Commission on the Future for Ameri-

1 ca's Veterans (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the
2 "Commission").

3 (b) ESTABLISHMENT OF PANELS.—There are estab-
4 lished within the Commission two panels as follows:

5 (1) The Panel on Veterans' Employment Op-
6 portunities (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the
7 "Opportunities Panel").

8 (2) The Panel on Veterans' Health Benefits
9 (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the "Health
10 Panel").

11 **SEC. 3. MEMBERSHIP.**

12 (a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission
13 shall be composed initially of 25 members. Upon termi-
14 nation of the Opportunities Panel, the Commission shall
15 be composed of 13 members, of whom one is the chairman
16 of the Commission and 12 are the members of the Health
17 Panel. The initial composition of the Commission is as fol-
18 lows:

19 (1) Three members shall be appointed by the
20 Speaker of the House of Representatives and the
21 majority leader of the Senate, jointly, in consultation
22 with the chairman of the Committee on Veterans'
23 Affairs of the Senate and the chairman of the Com-
24 mittee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Rep-
25 resentatives.

1 (2) Six members shall be appointed as follows:

2 (A) One member shall be the Under Sec-
3 retary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Adminis-
4 tration, Department of Veterans Affairs, or his
5 designee.

6 (B) One member shall be the Assistant
7 Secretary of Defense for Force Management
8 Personnel, Department of Defense, or his des-
9 ignee.

10 (C) One member shall be the Assistant
11 Secretary for Veterans Employment and Train-
12 ing, Department of Labor, or his designee.

13 (D) One member shall be the Under Sec-
14 retary for Health, Department of Veterans Af-
15 fairs, or his designee.

16 (E) One member shall be the Assistant
17 Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, De-
18 partment of Defense, or his designee.

19 (F) One member shall be the Assistant
20 Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Depart-
21 ment of Health and Human Services, or his
22 designee.

23 (3)(A) 16 members shall be appointed as fol-
24 lows:

1 (i) Six members, of whom one shall be a
2 representative of a veterans service organiza-
3 tion, shall be appointed by the chairman of the
4 Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate,
5 in consultation with the ranking member of
6 that committee.

7 (ii) Six members, of whom one shall be a
8 representative of a veterans service organiza-
9 tion, shall be appointed by the chairman of the
10 Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of
11 Representatives, in consultation with the rank-
12 ing member of that committee.

13 (iii) Two members shall be appointed by
14 the chairman of the Committee on Armed Serv-
15 ices of the Senate, in consultation with the
16 ranking member of that committee.

17 (iv) Two members shall be appointed by
18 the chairman of the Committee on National Se-
19 curity of the House of Representatives, in con-
20 sultation with the ranking member of that com-
21 mittee.

22 (B) The appointments of such members under
23 this paragraph shall be made from among individ-
24 uals who are not full-time officers or employees of
25 the United States and who have appropriate and di-

1 verse experience, expertise, and historical perspec-
2 tives on veterans, military, organizational, and man-
3 agement matters. To the maximum extent prac-
4 ticable, such individuals shall be veterans.

5 (C) The appointments of such members shall,
6 to the maximum extent practicable, be made after
7 consultation with representatives of veterans service
8 organizations.

9 (D)(i) Each appointing authority under this
10 paragraph shall designate one half of the members
11 such authority appoints to serve on the Opportuni-
12 ties Panel and the other half of the members such
13 authority appoints to serve on the Health Panel.

14 (ii) In the case of the representatives of a veter-
15 ans service organization described in clauses (i) and
16 (ii) of paragraph (A), the appointing authorities
17 under such clauses shall designate such representa-
18 tives to serve on the Opportunities Panel.

19 (b) DESIGNATION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE
20 CHAIRMEN.—The Speaker of the House of Representa-
21 tives and the majority leader of the Senate, jointly, in con-
22 sultation with the chairman of the Committee on Veter-
23 ans' Affairs of the Senate and the chairman of the Com-
24 mittee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representa-

1 tives shall, from the members appointed in subsection
2 (a)(1), designate—

3 (1) one as chairman of the Commission;

4 (2) one as vice chairman of the Commission to
5 serve as chairman of the Opportunities Panel; and

6 (3) one as vice chairman of the Commission to
7 serve as chairman of the Health Panel.

8 (c) OPPORTUNITIES PANEL.—The Opportunities
9 Panel shall be composed of 13 members of the Commission
10 as follows:

11 (1) The chairman of the Commission.

12 (2) The vice chairman of the Commission des-
13 ignated as the chairman of the Opportunities Panel.

14 (3) The members of the Commission appointed
15 in subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of subsection
16 (a)(2).

17 (4) The members appointed in subsection (a)(3)
18 designated to serve on the Opportunities Panel.

19 (d) HEALTH PANEL.—The Health Panel shall be
20 composed of 13 members of the Commission as follows:

21 (1) The chairman of the Commission.

22 (2) The vice chairman of the Commission des-
23 ignated as the chairman of the Health Panel.

1 (3) The members of the Commission appointed
2 in subparagraphs (D), (E), and (F) of subsection
3 (a)(2).

4 (4) The members appointed in subsection (a)(3)
5 designated to serve on the Health Panel.

6 (e) TIME OF APPOINTMENT.—The members of the
7 Commission shall be appointed not later than December
8 1, 1996.

9 (f) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—

10 (1) CHAIRMAN.—The chairman of the Commis-
11 sion shall be appointed for the life of the Commis-
12 sion.

13 (2) OPPORTUNITIES PANEL.—Except as pro-
14 vided in paragraph (1), a member of the Commis-
15 sion who serves on the Opportunities Panel shall be
16 appointed for the life of the Opportunities Panel.

17 (3) HEALTH PANEL.—Except as provided in
18 paragraph (1), a member of the Commission who
19 serves on the Health Panel shall be appointed for
20 the life of the Health Panel.

21 (4) VACANCIES.—Any vacancy in the Commis-
22 sion shall not affect its powers and shall be filled in
23 the same manner as the original appointment.

24 (g) INITIAL MEETING.—Not later than 30 days after
25 the date on which all members of the Commission have

1 been appointed, the Commission shall hold its first meet-
2 ing.

3 (h) QUORUM.—

4 (1) COMMISSION.—A majority of the members
5 of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a
6 lesser number may hold hearings.

7 (2) PANELS.—A majority of the members of a
8 panel shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number
9 may hold hearings.

10 (i) MEETINGS.—

11 (1) COMMISSION.—The Commission shall meet
12 at the call of the chairman of the Commission.

13 (2) PANELS.—A panel shall meet at the call of
14 the chairman of such panel.

15 (j) MAJORITY VOTE.—

16 (1) COMMISSION.—The Commission shall make
17 no recommendation unless approved by the affirma-
18 tive vote of a majority of the members of the Com-
19 mission.

20 (2) PANELS.—(A) Except as provided in sub-
21 paragraph (B), a panel shall make no recommenda-
22 tion, report, or legislative proposal unless approved
23 by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members
24 of the Panel.

1 (B) In the case of a report described in section
2 5(d)(3) or section 6(e)(2), no vote shall be required
3 to submit such report.

4 (k) **AUTHORITY OF INDIVIDUALS TO ACT FOR COM-**
5 **MISSION.**—Any member or agent of the Commission may,
6 if authorized by the Commission, take any action which
7 the Commission is authorized to take under this Act.

8 **SEC. 4. DUTIES OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION.**

9 The chairman of the Commission shall oversee the
10 progress of each panel, review weekly progress reports
11 from each panel, and allocate the Commission's resources
12 to enable each panel to carry out its duties.

13 **SEC. 5. DUTIES OF OPPORTUNITIES PANEL.**

14 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Opportunities Panel shall—

15 (1) review the efficacy and appropriateness of
16 veterans transition and assistance programs in pro-
17 viding assistance to members of the Armed Forces
18 in making the transition and adjustment to civilian
19 life upon their separation from the Armed Forces
20 and in providing assistance to veterans in adjusting
21 to civilian life;

22 (2) evaluate proposals for improving such pro-
23 grams, including proposals to consolidate, stream-
24 line, and enhance the provision of such assistance

1 and proposals for alternative means of providing
2 such assistance; and

3 (3) make recommendations to Congress regard-
4 ing means of ensuring the continuing utility of such
5 programs and assistance and of otherwise improving
6 such programs and the provision of such assistance.

7 (b) REVIEW OF PROGRAMS TO ASSIST MEMBERS OF
8 THE ARMED FORCES AT SEPARATION.—(1) While carry-
9 ing out the general duties specified in subsection (a), the
10 members of the Opportunities Panel appointed under
11 clauses (iii) and (iv) of section 3(a)(3)(A) shall review pri-
12 marily the programs intended to assist members of the
13 Armed Forces at the time of their separation from service
14 in the Armed Forces, including programs designed to as-
15 sist families of such members in preparing for the transi-
16 tion of such members from military life to civilian life and
17 to facilitate that transition.

18 (2) In carrying out the review, such members of the
19 Opportunities Panel shall determine the following:

20 (A) The adequacy of the programs referred to
21 in paragraph (1) for their purposes.

22 (B) The adequacy of the support of the Armed
23 Forces for such programs.

24 (C) The effect, if any, of the existence of such
25 programs on military readiness.

1 (D) The extent to which such programs provide
2 members of the Armed Forces with job-search skills.

3 (E) The extent to which such programs prepare
4 such members for employment in the private sector
5 and in the public sector.

6 (F) The effectiveness of such programs in as-
7 sisting such members in finding employment in the
8 public sector upon their separation from service.

9 (G) The ways in which such programs could be
10 improved in order to assist such members in secur-
11 ing meaningful employment in the private sector
12 upon their separation from service.

13 (c) REVIEW OF PROGRAMS TO ASSIST VETERANS.—

14 (1) While carrying out the general duties specified in sub-
15 section (a), the members of the Opportunities Panel ap-
16 pointed under clauses (i) and (ii) of section 3(a)(3)(A)
17 shall review primarily the adequacy of programs intended
18 to assist veterans (including disabled veterans, homeless
19 veterans, and economically disadvantaged veterans) in ad-
20 justing to civilian life, including the programs referred to
21 in paragraph (2).

22 (2) The programs referred to in paragraph (1) are
23 the following:

24 (A) Educational assistance programs.

1 (B) Job counseling, job training, and job place-
2 ment services programs.

3 (C) Rehabilitation and training programs.

4 (D) Housing loan programs.

5 (E) Small business loan and small business as-
6 sistance programs.

7 (F) Employment and employment training pro-
8 grams for employment in the public sector and the
9 private sector, including employer training programs
10 and union apprenticeship programs.

11 (G) Federal Government personnel policies (in-
12 cluding veterans' preference policies) and the en-
13 forcement of such policies.

14 (H) Programs that prepare the families of
15 members of the Armed Forces for their transition
16 from military life to civilian life and facilitate that
17 transition.

18 (d) REPORTS.—(1) Not later than 90 days after the
19 date on which all members of the Opportunities Panel
20 have been appointed, the Opportunities Panel shall submit
21 to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs and Armed Serv-
22 ices of the Senate and the Committees on Veterans' Af-
23 fairs and National Security of the House of Representa-
24 tives a report setting forth a plan for the work of the Op-
25 portunities Panel. The Opportunities Panel shall develop

1 the plan in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, the
2 Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the heads of other ap-
3 propriate departments and agencies of the Federal Gov-
4 ernment.

5 (2)(A) Not later than one year after the date of the
6 first meeting of the Opportunities Panel, the Opportuni-
7 ties Panel shall submit to the committees referred to in
8 paragraph (1), and to the Secretary of Defense, the Sec-
9 retary of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Labor, and
10 the Secretary of Education, a report setting forth the ac-
11 tivities, findings, and recommendations of the Opportuni-
12 ties Panel, including any recommendations for legislative
13 action and administrative action as the Opportunities
14 Panel considers appropriate.

15 (B) Not later than 90 days after receiving the report
16 referred to in subparagraph (A), the Secretary of Defense
17 and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly trans-
18 mit the report to Congress, together with the Secretaries'
19 comments on the report.

20 (3) The chairman of the Opportunities Panel shall
21 submit to the chairman of the Commission a weekly report
22 setting forth the activities of the Opportunities Panel for
23 the preceding week.

1 **SEC. 6. DUTIES OF HEALTH PANEL.**

2 (a) STUDY.—The Health Panel shall conduct a com-
3 prehensive study of health care services available under
4 the Department of Veterans Affairs.

5 (b) MATTERS STUDIED.—The matters studied by the
6 Health Panel shall include—

7 (1) previous and current legislative proposals to
8 improve delivery of health care to veterans, including
9 H.R. 1767 of the 104th Congress, H.R. 3117 of the
10 104th Congress, H.R. 3119 of the 104th Congress,
11 and the G.I. Bill of Health (H.R. 3950 of the 104th
12 Congress);

13 (2) alternative means for delivery of health care
14 to veterans (such as managed care); and

15 (3) eligibility reform.

16 (c) DEMONSTRATION PROJECT BILL.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than June 1,
18 1997, the Health Panel shall submit a legislative
19 proposal in the form of a draft bill (hereinafter in
20 this Act referred to as a “demonstration project
21 bill”) to the Congress.

22 (2) CONTENT OF BILL.—

23 (A) AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY.—A dem-
24 onstration project bill shall authorize the Sec-
25 retary of Veterans’ Affairs to implement tem-
26 porary demonstration projects to improve health

1 care services under the Department of Veter-
2 ans' Affairs.

3 (B) IMPLEMENTATION AT MEDICAL CEN-
4 TERS; TERMINATION.—A demonstration project
5 bill shall provide that the temporary demonstra-
6 tion projects be implemented at no fewer than
7 20 and no greater than 40 Department of Vet-
8 erans' Affairs medical centers specified in the
9 demonstration project bill and that such
10 projects terminate not later than April 1, 1999.

11 (C) SELECTION OF CENTERS.—In selecting
12 the centers to be specified in the demonstration
13 project bill, the chairman of the Health Panel
14 in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans'
15 Affairs shall assure a diversity of centers ac-
16 cording to geographic areas, demographic char-
17 acteristics of, and specialized medical services
18 provided by individual centers.

19 (d) EVALUATION OF PROJECTS; AUDIT.—The
20 Health Panel shall monitor and evaluate the temporary
21 demonstration projects, and the chairman of the Commis-
22 sion shall arrange for audits of such projects.

23 (e) REPORTS.—(1) Not later than October 1, 1998,
24 the Health Panel and the chairman of the Commission
25 shall submit a report to Congress which shall contain a

1 detailed statement of findings and conclusions of the
2 Health Panel and such chairman with respect to the tem-
3 porary demonstration projects together with recommenda-
4 tions for such legislation and administrative actions as the
5 Health Panel and such chairman consider appropriate.

6 (2) The chairman of the Health Panel shall submit
7 to the chairman of the Commission a weekly report setting
8 forth the activities of the Health Panel for the preceding
9 week.

10 **SEC. 7. EXPEDITED CONGRESSIONAL PROCEDURE.**

11 (a) PROCEDURE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTA-
12 TIVES.—

13 (1) INTRODUCTION.—The provisions of this
14 subsection shall only apply to a demonstration
15 project bill that is introduced by the majority leader
16 of the House of Representatives for himself and the
17 minority leader of the House of Representatives, or
18 by Members designated jointly by the majority lead-
19 er and the minority leader of the House of Rep-
20 resentatives, not later than the close of the 15th day
21 after the date on which such bill is submitted to the
22 House of Representatives under section 6(c).

23 (2) COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION.—If a commit-
24 tee to which a demonstration project bill has been
25 referred has not reported such bill at the close of the

1 10th day after the date of the bill's introduction,
2 such committee shall be automatically discharged
3 from further consideration of the bill, and the bill
4 shall be placed on the appropriate calendar.

5 (3) COMPUTATION OF DAYS.—For purposes of
6 this subsection, in computing the number of days,
7 there shall be excluded any day on which the House
8 of Representatives is not in session.

9 (b) PROCEDURE IN THE SENATE.—

10 (c) RULES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
11 AND SENATE.—This section is enacted by the Congress—

12 (1) as an exercise of the rulemaking power of
13 the House of Representatives and the Senate, re-
14 spectively, and as such it shall be considered as part
15 of the rules of each House, respectively, or of that
16 House to which it specifically applies, and such rules
17 shall supersede other rules only to the extent that
18 they are inconsistent therewith; and

19 (2) with full recognition of the constitutional
20 right of either House to change the rules (so far as
21 relating to such House) at any time, in the same
22 manner and to the same extent as in the case of any
23 other rule of that House.

1 **SEC. 8. POWERS.**

2 (a) HEARINGS.—Each panel may hold such hearings,
3 sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony,
4 and receive such evidence as the such panel considers ad-
5 visable to carry out the purposes of this Act.

6 (b) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—The
7 chairman of the Commission may secure directly from the
8 Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense,
9 and any other department or agency of the Federal Gov-
10 ernment such information as the chairman of the Commis-
11 sion considers necessary to carry out the duties under this
12 Act. Upon request of the chairman of the Commission, the
13 head of such department or agency shall furnish such in-
14 formation expeditiously to the Commission.

15 (c) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—The Commission may
16 contract with and compensate government and private
17 agencies or persons for supplies or services, without regard
18 to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 5).

19 **SEC. 9. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS.**

20 (a) POSTAL SERVICES.—The Commission may use
21 the United States mails in the same manner and under
22 the same conditions as other departments and agencies of
23 the Federal Government.

24 (b) GIFTS.—The Commission may accept, use, and
25 dispose of gifts or donations of services or property.

1 (c) MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.—

2 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of
3 Defense shall, upon the request of the chairman of the
4 Commission, furnish the Commission or a panel, on a re-
5 imburseable basis, such administrative and support services
6 as the Commission may require.

7 **SEC. 10. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.**

8 (a) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-
10 graph (2), each member of the Commission shall be
11 compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent
12 of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level
13 IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of
14 title 5, United States Code, for each day (including
15 travel time) during which such member is engaged
16 in performing the duties of the Commission.

17 (2) PROHIBITION OF COMPENSATION OF FED-
18 ERAL EMPLOYEES.—Members of the Commission
19 who are full-time officers or employees of the United
20 States or Members of Congress may not receive ad-
21 ditional pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of
22 their service on the Commission.

23 (b) TRAVEL.—Members and personnel of the Com-
24 mission may travel on military aircraft, military vehicles,
25 or other military conveyances when travel is necessary in

1 the performance of a duty of the Commission except when
2 the cost of commercial transportation is less expensive.

3 (c) STAFF.—

4 (1) APPOINTMENT.—The chairman of the Com-
5 mission, with respect to the Commission, the chair-
6 man of the Opportunities Panel with respect to such
7 panel, and the chairman of the Health Panel, with
8 respect to such panel, respectively may appoint,
9 without regard to civil service laws and regulations,
10 an executive director and such additional personnel
11 as may be necessary to enable the Commission and
12 each panel to perform the duties under this Act.
13 Each executive director shall be a veteran, and in
14 appointing additional personnel the chairmen shall
15 give preference to veterans.

16 (2) COMPENSATION.—The chairman of the
17 Commission may fix the compensation of the execu-
18 tive directors and other personnel without regard to
19 the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of
20 chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating
21 to classification of positions and General Schedule
22 pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the execu-
23 tive director and other personnel may not exceed the
24 rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule
25 under section 5316 of such title.

1 (d) DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Upon
2 request of the chairman of the Commission, the head of
3 any department or agency of the Federal Government may
4 detail, on a nonreimbursable basis, any personnel of the
5 department or agency to the Commission to assist the
6 Commission and each panel in carrying out the duties
7 under this Act.

8 (e) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMIT-
9 TENT SERVICES.—The chairman of the Commission may
10 procure temporary and intermittent services under section
11 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individ-
12 uals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual
13 rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive
14 Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

15 **SEC. 11. FUNDING.**

16 Of the amounts appropriated for the Department of
17 Veterans' Affairs for fiscal year 1997 or subsequent fiscal
18 years, the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs shall make avail-
19 able to the Commission such amounts as may be necessary
20 for the Commission to carry out its duties under this Act.

21 **SEC. 12. TERMINATIONS.**

22 (a) OPPORTUNITIES PANEL.—The Opportunities
23 Panel shall terminate 30 days after the date on which the
24 panel submits its report under section 5(d)(2).

1 (b) HEALTH PANEL.—The Health Panel shall termi-
2 nate 30 days after the date of the termination of the tem-
3 porary demonstration projects under section 6(c).

4 (c) COMMISSION.—The Commission shall terminate
5 30 days after the later of the date of termination of the
6 Opportunities Panel or of the date of termination of the
7 Health Panel.

8 **SEC. 13. DEFINITIONS.**

9 As used in this Act:

10 (1) The term “veteran” has the meaning given
11 such term in section 101(2) of title 38, United
12 States Code.

13 (2) The term “veterans transition and assist-
14 ance program” means any program of the Federal
15 Government the purpose of which is—

16 (A) to assist, by rehabilitation or other
17 means, members of the Armed Forces in read-
18 justing or otherwise making the transition to ci-
19 vilian life upon their separation from service in
20 the Armed Forces; or

21 (B) to assist veterans in civilian life.

22 (3) The term “veterans service organization”
23 means any organization covered by section 5902(a)
24 of title 38, United States Code.

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